

The Old Paths and the Good Way.

A

S E R M O N

PREACHED ON THE OCCASION OF THE DEDICATION

OF THE

SHARON BAPTIST MEETING HOUSE,

WARREN COUNTY, N. C.,

SEPTEMBER 20th, 1857.

BY ELDER J. B. SOLOMON,

WARRENTON, N. C.

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BAPTIST CHURCH WARRENTON, N. C., }
October 10th, 1857. }

ELDER J. B. SOLOMON,

Dear Sir—At a regular meeting of this church, a resolution was passed, and we, the undersigned, appointed a committee, to procure of you for publication, a copy of the dedicatory sermon delivered at Sharon, on the third Sunday in September, 1857.

Hoping it may be convenient for you to furnish it at an early moment, we are

Very truly yours,

JAS. A. EGGERTON,
WM. B. WILLIAMS,
DAVID PARRISH,
E. T. RICE,

Committee.

WARRENTON, N. C., }
Oct. 26th, 1857. }

MESSRS. EGGERTON, WILLIAMS AND OTHERS,

Committee,

DEAR BRETHREN—After much hesitation, and some doubts as to its propriety, I have consented to grant the request contained in your note of the 10th inst., and herewith forward to you a copy of the sermon. Did I not feel willing to rely on the judgment of the brethren, as to the merits of the sermon in question, I should unhesitatingly have declined the request. Hoping the doctrines advocated may be made more serviceable to the cause of truth in a published form, I yield the manuscript, with the many imperfections it may contain, to your hands. May it please our heavenly Father to bless this feeble effort to a good end.

Accept for yourselves, brethren, my acknowledgments for the courteous manner in which you have expressed the wishes of the church.

With the highest Christian regards,

I am, your affectionate pastor,

J. B. SOLOMON.



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SERMON.

"Stand ye in the ways and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls."—*Jeremiah vi: 16.*

The *wisdom* of God is shown in the perfection of his plans, both as respects their *construction*, and also their execution. This is true of all his works, both in nature and grace. Whatever be the end to be attained, the plan by which it is to be done is so constructed as to ensure success. Unlike man, Jehovah is under no necessity for making *experiments*. He has not to resort to a variety of expedients, that he may compass the end had in view.

The truth of this position is found in the economy of the material world. Here every part fulfills its Maker's design in its creation, and in carrying forward his *grand* design in the construction of the material fabric. Moreover, while every part conspires to carry forward the designs of the Maker, these designs are shown to be harmonious. There is not dissimilarity of design, nor do the several parts of this creation tend to the accomplishment of dissimilar designs.

As this is acknowledged to be true in respect to the world of matter, as carrying forward the design of its Creator; so if this design be carried forward, it must be by *obedience to the laws* of its construction, and not by a change of those laws, otherwise there is error in the construction. But who so bold as to dare improve upon the plan of the structure of the material world! He who would do so by a *neglect* of its laws would not only forfeit his claim for sanity of mind, but would dearly pay for his temerity.

But if it be shown that there is perfection in the plan of Jehovah in his *material* kingdom, is it unreasonable to look for the same perfection in the *kingdom of grace*? Would it not be to charge Jehovah with prizing more highly the material and perishable, than the spiritual and immortal? And does this accord with the character of God? Does he not ever show more care and interest for the welfare of the spiritual? Surely none will deny it. And is there not perfection in the plan of salvation revealed in his word? Do we not see his wisdom shine out in unclouded splendor in the *perfection* of that plan?

Again, if this be true of the general plan of salvation, and his general purposes of grace, is it reasonable to suppose it would be less true in the economy of that last organization which he will ever give to the world—the church? Shall there be perfection in all his plans affecting the material world, embracing no less the

dust of the balance than the mountain—the grain of sand than the globe? And shall there be perfection in the world of animal life, from the insect of a day to the arch-angel? And shall there be perfection in the plan, which was four thousand years in process of development? Shall there, I say, be perfection in all these, and yet *imperfection* be found in the final organization? We cannot so think. We regard the church, organized by our Lord, as perfectly adapted to the end for which it was appointed. For confirmation of this position, consider first, The *character* given it: “Ye (disciples) are the light of the world.” Second, The *work* committed to it: “Preach the gospel to every creature.” Third, The *permanence* given it: “The gates of hell shall not prevail against it.” The church of the Lord Jesus Christ is to be, for all coming time, the medium through which the grace of God in Christ is to be communicated to a wicked and lost world. Can it be reasonably supposed that he constituted it for this end, and yet that he left it imperfect, and inadequate to its accomplishment? No, he stamped it with marks of the same wisdom as found in all other of his plans. But have the professed followers of Christ been true to the trust committed to them? Have they been content to *do* what he has required, without alteration, or amendments? If so, whence the many claimants to be his church? and whence the continual clash of arms among his professed friends? Evidently there is error. All these various claimants cannot possibly be right.

One says, “Lo, *here* is Christ; another, “No, Lo, *there* is Christ.” Now, amidst the din and strife, how is the humble enquirer after truth to decide? How can he determine who, if any, is right? By obedience to our text, let us turn from the noisy strife, and seek the will of God, as shown us in his holy word. Let us go back to the *inspired* word for guidance, and devoutly listen to its teachings. Then we shall find “the old paths—the good way.”

The object of the remarks I have to make, will be to show what was “the good way,” in which the apostle acted in reference to the organization called *church*. We, Baptists, my friends, are strangers to you. We come amongst you as a people, differing from our brethren of other denominations. You have a right to ask us *who* we are, and *what* do we teach. This you have a right to ask, and it becomes our duty to give you a candid and plain answer. If our sentiments and motives be honest, we need not fear to declare them; and if dishonest, the sooner you are apprised of the fact the better.

It is no new question, my friends, “where is the church of Jesus Christ?” As stated above, there are many claimants, and we among the rest. We shall not turn aside to discuss the merits of the respective claimants, but shall content ourselves by an enquiry into the *doctrine* and *policy* of the apostolic churches, and shall test our claim to the honor of being the churches of

Jesus Christ, by a comparison of the two—*ours* with the *apostolic* churches.

In this investigation we cannot, of course, enter minutely into the details of either ; but shall only present for discussion, the principal points wherein we differ from our brethren of other persuasions. As stated above, we shall present two general points for discussion.

I. What was the *polity* of the apostolic churches ?

II. What were the *doctrines* of these churches ?

We propose to present the views we hold peculiarly on these subjects, and give you our reasons for these views as we proceed. And permit us to say that we do not differ from our brethren of other persuasions materially, as to what we understand of the meaning of the term “church.” “It is a congregation of faithful men, in which the pure word of God is preached, and the sacraments be duly ministered according to Christ’s ordinance in all those things that of necessity are requisite to the same.”—(Book of Common Prayer, art. rel. art. xix.) We understand by the term *church*, in the sense in which we shall use it on the present occasion, a local organization for the proper worship of God, and administration of his ordinances according to his word. And—

I. We hold that every separate or individual organization is *independent* of all similar organizations. Each such church is equal to any other, and independent of all others. We argue this,

1. From the fact that they are thus represented in the word of God. We read of the *church* at Corinth, the *church* at Ephesus, the *church* at Rome, &c., &c. The *churches* of Asia are thus addressed. We hear nothing of the *Asiatic church*, but CHURCHES. “To the seven *churches* in Asia.” “To the seven churches which are in Asia.” We read nothing of the *European church*, or the *African church*. The New Testament nowhere speaks of a national church, nor does it recognize any national organization as the church of Jesus Christ. The several local organizations are recognized as so many separately existing organizations, which could not have been the case, if there was dependence of one upon the other, for in that case neither of these organizations would have been complete, and to address them as such would have been inappropriate.

2. Had one of these local organizations been dependent upon any other, of whatever character or name, it would have been amenable to it, and we cannot believe that such would have been the case without some intimation of the fact from Christ, or some of the apostles. But that such was not the case, we shall show anon. No church in the apostolic day felt its dependence upon any other church for its existence, or any part of it. In this, it is hardly worth my while to say we differ from perhaps all other denominations of any note. Here is the *Presbyterian church*, the

Protestant Episcopal church, the Roman Catholic church, the Methodist Episcopal church, &c., &c., uniting the several separate organizations into one great establishment, thus making them mutually dependent on each other, and all more or less dependent upon some central power. In all this we conceive they have departed from the "old paths"—the apostolic plan, from the fact that they have destroyed the independence of the local organizations.

Let it not be said that this is a small matter. We regard nothing as small which Christ has appointed; and if he has left for our guidance a model perfected, we dare not depart from it. We do not advert to the facts involved in these statements with an invidious design, but to bring out our meaning in reference to the independence of the several churches. It was a departure from this simple plan in this particular that gave to Rome its despotic power for twelve centuries, and thus deluged the world in blood and error. We should learn wisdom from the past, and although the danger may not now be so imminent, yet we would do well to take warning and follow the teachings of Christ.

II. From these suggestions you would expect that *we hold that the members of these separate organizations, in their church capacity, constitute the highest ecclesiastical courts* for the trial of offences and the transaction of business; AND SO WE DO. We recognize no higher court of appeal, but regard the church as holding plenary power, from Christ, to manage all its own affairs. This, we think, is plain, from the action of the disciples, as recorded in the first chapter of the Acts of the Apostles. Judas Iscariot had fallen from his apostleship by transgression, and a successor was appointed by the suffrages of the *whole body* of disciples then assembled, including the *women*.—Acts i: 14, compared with i: 24-26. Here we have an illustration of the "old path and good way," as practiced by the apostles, in the appointment of an apostle. We argue, that if the whole body has a voice in the appointment of a minister, it is fair to presume the entire business of the church was transacted by the church itself. But we have proof still further. In the fifteenth chapter of Acts, we have these facts: "Then pleased it the apostles, and elders, and brethren, *with the whole church*, to send chosen men of *their own company* to Antioch, with Paul and Barnabas. And they wrote by them in this manner: The apostles, and elders, *and brethren*, send greeting *unto the brethren* which are of the Gentiles in Antioch, and Syria, and Cilicia."—V. 22, 23.

We further learn that this epistle was delivered, not to a few men of authority in the church, but to the whole body of the church. Read 30th verse. "So when they were dismissed they came to Antioch; and when they had *gathered the multitude together*, they delivered the epistle." In this transaction the following facts are worthy of notice: 1. The difficulty in the church at Antioch was among the "brethren" (members) of the church.

2. The church determined to investigate the points in dispute. 3. Feeling the need of counsel, they, *of their own accord*, seek advice of the church at Jerusalem. 4. This advice is given by consent of the whole church. 5. The epistle sent by them (the church at Jerusalem) is only advisory, and contains nothing of a mandatory character. There is no assumption of a right to control or govern the church at Antioch. These facts, it seems to us, have a very important bearing in determining the question of the rights and authority of the apostolic churches. Whatever is done in the matter is done with the consent and participation of the *whole church*.

But we have not yet done. Paul in his first epistle to the Corinthians, fifth chapter, has occasion to give his opinion in a case of disorder that was in the church. But he simply gives his opinion and advice to the church, that they (the church) *should exclude* this incestuous man from their fellowship. He recognizes the principle for which we contend, *that whatever was done must be done by the whole church*. They possessed power to exclude from their fellowship, and *they only*. There was no appeal to a higher tribunal. The action of the church to which this disorderly man belonged was *final*. Of this it seems to us there can be no doubt. Farther, this action corresponds precisely with the direction of Christ, with respect to the man who would not be reconciled to his brother, as recorded in the eighteenth chapter of the gospel by Matthew. If after private remonstrance and effort, the offender still remained *obstinate*, he was to be taken *before the church*; and if he refused to be admonished by them, he was to be excluded, and *excluded by the action of the church*. There was no appeal allowed to synods, or conferences, or conventions. The action of the church was the *final* action. Hence we regard the individual church as the highest ecclesiastical court. This is the "old path—the good way." It is the way in which the apostles acted: let us "walk therein."

To this view agrees also the united testimony of history. The churches, as constituted by Christ and his apostles, were communities. All were permitted to participate in the transaction of the business of the churches; the women only being forbidden to speak in the public assembly: and from the record of Acts first, we doubt whether this prohibition extended any farther than to a participation in *discussions* which might arise in the churches.* It seems at least clear that even the female part of the churches had a voice in the appointment of the minister. This we hold;

* I beg leave to quote one or two extracts referred to above:—"The essence of the Christian community rested on this: That no one individual should be the chosen, pre-eminent organ of the Holy Spirit for the guidance of the whole; but all were to co-operate, each at his particular position, and with the gifts bestowed on him, one supplying what might be wanted by another—for the advancement of the Christian life and of the common end. The Apostle Paul (1 Cor. xiv. 34,) interdicts the female part of the church alone from public speaking in the assemblies; which makes it evident again, that no other exception existed to the universality of this right, among Christians." The italics are my own. Nean. Hist. Christ. Rel. and Ch. vol. 1, pp. 181-2.

and it is not uncommon for the sisters to have a voice in the selection of their pastors. Hence,

III. We hold that the members of these separate organizations constitute a *community*, each one being entitled to the *rights of a citizen*. There are no *exclusive* privileges. One cannot be allowed privileges not enjoyed by all the rest. One has no power or influence which is not equally enjoyed by all, except such as arise from natural advantages. The religion of Christ does not propose to interfere with the natural relations and duties of men, further than to ennoble and direct them. The members of the churches, therefore, had equal rights and privileges. Hence, says the apostle: "Now, therefore, ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but *fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God.*" Eph. ii: 19. As citizens, they are entitled to the privileges and immunities of citizenship. Each one being *only* a citizen, their *rights and privileges must be equal*. The jurisdiction of the affairs of the church does not therefore belong to a session or vestry, or "the preacher in charge," or to the conference, either "quarterly," "annual," or "general." It belongs entirely to the church, as a body or a community, and none have a divine right to remove it therefrom. This is "the old path—the good way," as shown from the Scriptures themselves. Let us "walk therein."

IV. We hold that no man or set of men has right to make laws to bind the consciences of the members of the churches. The churches of Christ constitute his visible kingdom on earth, and the members of these churches are his visible subjects. We pretend not to say that all who are members of his churches are the *real* subjects of Christ's kingdom, but all are his *professed* subjects, and our position is that no man, or assembly of men, has right to legislate for the government of these *subjects, as such*. This we argue,

1. From the fact that it is *absurd* to say that Christ established a kingdom on earth *without appointing laws for its government*. What kind of a kingdom is that destitute of law? Well, if Christ has appointed the laws of his own kingdom, he has not left it to men to do it. He has left no representative as *legislator*. Again: If he has appointed the laws for the government of his own kingdom—his churches—*it is that these laws may be executed* with certainty. Now, how could this be, if there was another law-making power? How could we be assured that the laws of Christ would not be set aside by the enactment of this *other* law-making power? How, again, could there be *conformity* in the laws of the kingdom, when there is more than one law-maker? We hold that Christ *has established* his kingdom on earth, and that he has done so by appointing laws for the government of his subjects: and if he has appointed these laws, it is absurd to say that he has left another to do it for him.

2. Christ is said to be the "Head of the church," in the sense

of Chief or Governor. He is not said to be one of the heads, but **THE HEAD**. Some claim the bishop for head; the Scriptures represent Christ as Head; and any body with more than one head is a monster. No well organized body has more than one head, in any sense; and as the head gives direction to the entire body, so does Christ to his church, which is called his body. Christ sustains a similar relation to the church, which the head of the man sustains to his body. As such, he must control the body; he must direct it; he must provide for it. It is impossible for us to have a full sense of this relation which he sustains to the body—the church—and tolerate the idea of any other Lawgiver than Christ. He, and he *only*, has the right to make laws for his kingdom.

3. Otherwise it is not his kingdom at all. How can that be his kingdom, over which he exercises no authority? And how can he exercise authority, without law? How, then, can the church be called his kingdom, unless it be governed entirely and exclusively by his law? As well may we say that this republic is a part and parcel of the British dominions. We ~~can~~ not, though it be called the United States of America; the *name* will make no difference, if the *thing* be so. And what if we should declare ourselves the subjects of the British crown, while we continue to claim the right to execute our own laws? Would not that be as consistent, and more pardonable, than for us to profess to be the subjects of Christ's kingdom, and still claim the right of making the laws for our own government? Christ is the King eternal over his church, and any claim that has the least tendency to weaken the right which is vested in him, is to that extent a denial of his royal prerogative. He reserves to *himself* this right, and we dare not refuse to grant it.

Let it not be said that the decrees of councils, conventions, synods and conferences, are only expressions of opinion, and are not intended as laws for the government of the churches. The history of the past will refute such a plea. If they serve no such purpose, what is the use of their publication in the form in which they are published. It is but fair to say, that they can serve but a poor purpose unless they are regarded in the light of authoritative documents, saying what shall be believed, and what practised. Christ is the only Lawgiver to his people. This is "the old path—the good way."

V. We hold that the *churches are the executives of the laws of Christ*, the King, and *are bound to execute them*. We do not deny that the churches have authority, nay, much authority. But it is not *legislative* authority. All the power they possess is *executive*. There is the difference here, that exists between our legislatures and our courts. It is the duty of the legislature to *make* laws, but it is the business of the courts to execute these laws. As it is not the right of the court to alter or amend, but to *execute* the laws of the State, so it is not the duty of the church to alter, amend, or in any wise to interfere with the laws of Christ, but simply to enforce, or execute the laws which Christ

has appointed. And here permit me to remark, that we are not at liberty to pass upon the propriety or impropriety of any of the laws. Do we think some of them have the appearance of harshness? It is not for us to decide that point. We have nothing to do with that. All about which we need concern ourselves is—first, to know what the law is; and second, to execute its commands. Doing this, we have discharged our duty, and are not responsible for the consequences. But let us not be hasty to conclude that the laws of our King are severe. No: he is benignity itself. All the duties he enjoins—all the prohibitions he has enacted—all the regulations he has made—are wise and beneficent, and we shall find it so, if we will obey. He has commanded us to “*teach to observe ALL things WHATSOEVER which HE has commanded us.*” We dare not teach or do that which another has commanded in the name of Christ. We dare not refuse to do *all* that he has commanded. It is his to command; it is ours to obey. This is our duty, and if we discharge it, happy are we. Our blessed Redeemer has made us, the church, the executors of his own laws. Shall we be faithful to the trust committed to our care? or shall we virtually complain of his ways, by neglecting what he has enjoined, and making the plea of a charitable disposition? Remember, my friends, Christ will say, “to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams.”

Nor can we shield ourselves from censure by pleading that *prudential* considerations may justify us in failing to execute with vigor the laws of the kingdom to which we belong. There is no prudence equal to that of obeying the voice of the Lord. And in all such cases we claim to be more prudent than our Lord, and propose to amend the plan which he has devised; and thereby charge him with devising a plan which *we can* amend! What daring, what horrid presumption do we exhibit, when we refuse to execute the laws of Christ! If his churches do not execute his laws on earth, then who shall? Nay, friends, a strict conformity to the laws of Christ, in all their requirements and prohibitions—in all he commands and forbids—will please him, and this alone. This is the “old path and good way;” let us “walk therein.”

VI. We hold that, while the ministers of the gospel should be “esteemed very highly for their works’ sake,” yet they have no right to “lord it over God’s heritage,” whether it be done under the title of pope or bishop, elder, deacon or pastor; and whether this be done in general councils, synods, conventions or conferences.

A faithful minister of the gospel of the Son of God is worthy of all honor, as an ambassador for Christ. His office is such as no other man holds. The honor conferred by national courts upon their ambassadors is paltry, compared to that conferred by the King in Zion upon those whom he appoints as his ambassadors to a guilty world.

"There stands the messenger of truth; there stands
The legate of the skies! His theme divine,
His office sacred, his credentials clear."

The Scriptures everywhere represent the ministerial office and character as of the highest dignity and importance. The minister, in a very important sense, "negotiates between God and man." And his character and general deportment are expected and required by the Scriptures, to manifest a high degree of self-denial. All this we grant. We would not, in the least degree, refuse the ministers of Jesus Christ the rights and dignities secured to them by himself. Nay, he has wisely adjusted the matter, and we would not interfere with it.

All this we hold. But we hold also that the minister, as his designation clearly proves, must consent to be the servant, in a certain sense, and not the master of the churches. This we hold—

1. From the fact that the apostles themselves did not assume the right to govern the churches which they had planted. Nowhere in the New Testament do we find any claim of this character. In the case referred to above, (see 1 Cor. v: 4-5,) Paul assumes no authority in the premises, but only expresses his judgment, and advises the church as to what *they should do*. This, we remark, is a very different course to that of one who feels his superior right and power by virtue of his office. In the latter case there would be something of a mandatory character. But it is not so here.

But perhaps a more forcible proof and illustration of our position is found in the conduct of the apostles in the case of the church at Antioch seeking advice of the church at Jerusalem. Here, as we have already shown, there was no claim to superior power and authority offered by the apostles or elders. They participated in the action had, with the whole church, and there is not the slightest intimation that any superiority of authority was allowed or claimed by any one—not even by the apostles themselves.

This case seems to us to have a very important bearing on the question of the authority of ministers. Here was a fair opportunity afforded these apostles to exercise their authority in the matter by *issuing a decree* that the Christians at Antioch should believe this or that, or do this or the other. Had this been the case, we cannot doubt that the advocates of clerical authority would long since have produced it as proof of the divine right to such authority. Why, then, may we not regard it as settling the question in favor of our view? We conceive it legitimate to do so.

This view is further sustained by the language of Paul to the Corinthians: "Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ." Paul would put to shame the pretensions of those who profess to be his successors in office, and yet claim that others

should submit to them, in matters of faith and duty. He claimed no such right, but directed the church to follow him *only as he followed Christ*. The idea of superiority is inconsistent with that of brotherhood. The very term *brother* requires that there be *equality of right*, and hence, as applied to the members of the Christian churches, is inconsistent with that system which secures to the minister authority superior to that possessed by the laity.

The assumption of authority by the clergy was the work of a post-apostolic age. By degrees this was done, till Anti-Christ was fully developed in the Bishop of Rome. It was this assumption of superior rights, on the part of the clergy, that culminated in the frightful powers of this bishop. For as the ministry was superior to the laity, so was one minister superior to others, and thus was the gradation consummated. Thus, too, was the simple plan established by our Lord and his apostles subverted, and a system of priest-craft established. The most authentic historians of these latter times sustain the views here presented. Imperceptibly was the power of the clergy increased, and as a consequence, the rights and independence of the laity diminished, until the clergy had become omnipotent, and the laity had become the mere tools and vassals of this unwarranted power. The results of this departure from the apostolic model; the sad spectacle that is presented to the mind of the student of ecclesiastical history, for twelve or thirteen centuries, next succeeding the triumph of this effort on the part of the professed ambassadors of the meek and lowly Jesus, afford a fearful commentary on the departure of his friends from the plan of his own appointment. Had the clergy adhered to the original constitution, and contented themselves with their legitimate powers in guiding the churches into a vigorous execution of the laws of the king, the world would have been spared much of the blood that stains the pages of its annals, and Christianity would have been held forth to the world as the palladium of her rights and the ensign of peace.*

* In proof of the position here defended, permit me to make the following extracts from Neander's History of the Christian Religion and Church. Speaking of the church of the apostolic times, he says: "This was a whole, composed of equal members, all the members being but organs of the community, as this was the body quickened by the Spirit of Christ. It could hardly work itself out in a natural way from the essence of the Christian life and of Christian fellowship, that *this guidance should be placed in the hands of only one individual*. The monarchial form of government was not suited to the Christian community of spirits. The preponderance of one individual at the head of the whole, might too easily operate as a check on the free development of the life of the church, and the free co-operation of the different organs, in whom the consciousness of mutual independence must ever be kept alive. *Monarchy in spiritual things* does not harmonise with the spirit of Christianity; for this points every where to the feeling of a mutual need of help; to the necessity, and to the great advantage, as well of common counsel, as of common prayer. Again: as regards the relation in which these presbyters (elders) stood to the communities; they were not designed to exercise absolute authority, but to act as presiding officers and guides of an ecclesiastical republic; to conduct all things with the co-operation of the communities as their ministers, and not their masters." Speaking of the "*changes in the constitution of the Christian church after the age of the apostles*", he says: "They related especially to the three following particulars: 1. The distinction of bishops from presby-

The practice of the apostles should be our guide, for although the divergence may at first seem trifling, yet its results may be of the most fearful character, as seen from the facts of authentic history. But whatever may be the results, we should follow apostolic teachings and practice, because this is the "the old path—the good way," and a departure therefrom opens the flood-gates of corruption.

These are our views of church government, and we conceive that they are sanctioned by the Word of God. We cannot enter into a *full investigation* of all the scriptures pertaining to this matter in one discourse, but content ourselves with presenting the general outlines of our polity, as contrasted and compared with the divine Word. From this imperfect sketch, we are enabled to discover the "*old path*." Let us "walk therein, and we shall find rest to our souls."

II. This brings us to our second general enquiry: Where is the "old path and the good way," in respect to the doctrines of the apostolic churches? What were the doctrines of the olden time—the apostolic times? As in respect to the other, so also in respect to this point, we must be permitted to confine ourselves to the more *prominent points of difference between ourselves and others*. And,

I. In what respects do we differ from others in those doctrines generally termed "*the doctrines of grace*." Permit us here to remark, that we do not find such a vast difference between ourselves and the *published* doctrines and standards of others—the diversity not being greater, perhaps, than is found to exist among our brethren of other persuasions. We are happy to be able to make this statement. While our brethren of other denominations still hold and inculcate, *as the leading article of faith*, repentance toward God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, as the condition of justification before God, we hail them as children beloved, though disobedient in some very important points, and can unite with them in the promotion and inculcation of these two great doctrines.

We have said that we do not differ widely from their *published* standards and creeds, yet it is true that we do differ from most of them in some of their articles of faith on these doctrines. On this point, however, we do not feel called upon on the present occasion to enter into extended remarks. We will call your attention to one point.

1. While we regard the *sovereignty of God* as the only true idea—the scripture doctrine, applicable to every case of repent-

ters, and the gradual development of the monarchico-episcopal church government. 2. The distinction of the clergy from the laity, and the formation of a sacerdotal caste, as opposed to the evangelical idea of the priesthood. 3. The multiplication of church officers." In referring to the authority assumed by the clergy in the age after the apostles, he says: "Such an assumption was shown by the Roman bishop, Victor, when about the year 190 he excommunicated the churches of Asia Minor, on account of some trifling dispute relating to mere externals." Vol. I, pp. 183, 184, 189, 190, 214. Translated by Prof. Toney.

ance and regeneration to God, yet we cannot fully endorse the sentiments of the celebrated John Calvin, in his work called his "Institutes." We conceive that the doctrine is, in this work, pushed to an extreme, and hence conclusions deduced which are unwarranted by the word of God.

2. While we hold the doctrine of the voluntary, free, unconstrained action of man, we cannot fully endorse the sentiments of Arminius, or his followers and admirers. We conceive the true "path," the "good way," to lie in the "golden medinum." On these points, however, we must be permitted to remark that the "Arminianism" of the present day is a very different thing from the doctrines of James Arminius, the reputed founder of the Arminian system.*

II. But in what do we differ from our brethren of other denominations in respect to the doctrines of the ordinances? In these we differ VERY MATERIALLY from all other denominations known among us. We are, in respect to the ordinances of our churches, a "peculiar people." Let us see if we are in the "*old paths*" in these matters. By the Scriptures we propose to be tried, and abide their decision. For we acknowledge nothing else as authoritative in Christian duty, no less than in Christian doctrine. This is our book of prayer, discipline, and confession of faith. To this we appeal, and with it stand or by it fall. We acknowledge no human authority in matters of duty to God. We cannot submit to be governed by human creeds, or the uncertain and often contradictory teachings of tradition. We require a divine warrant for our practice, and nothing less will satisfy us. While, therefore, others may content themselves to follow the ambiguities of traditionary lore, or make concessions to the decrees of synods, conventions or conferences, let us "stand in the ways, and see, and ask for the *old paths*, where is the *good way*, and walk therein." Rest assured if God has given laws to his churches, he will not hold him guiltless who forsakes his laws, and follows human authority instead of his laws? Are the laws of Christ authoritative? Then away with all human creeds. Give us THE WORD. We are not willing it shall be supplanted, or its authority weakened by its union with the systems of man. Taking the Bible, then, as "our only rule of faith and practice," we discard all other authority *as law*, and appeal to it as our guide. And,

1. We hold that none but those who make a credible profession of faith in Christ are proper subjects for the ordinances of his kingdom. Whoever would participate in the ordinances commonly called *sacraments*, must make a credible profession of faith in Christ. We argue this,

* It would be a matter of no little surprise to one, whose mind has never been directed to this point, to see how different from the doctrines of this great and good man, is that system to which his name is now attached. It is an injury of the gravest character done his name, and its perpetrators should be rebuked.

(1.) From the fact that all who were baptized by the apostles, *so far as the record clearly shows*, made a profession of faith in Jesus, as the Christ. There is not a case recorded of any others receiving baptism at the hands of the apostles. Soon after the resurrection of Christ, according to promise previously made, the Holy Ghost was poured out on the day of Pentecost. Many were convicted of sin, and cried, "*what shall we do?*" They were told what to do; they complied, and were baptized; and the same day three thousand were added to the believers. No one claims that any were baptized who did not make a profession of faith in Christ. This is the first case of baptism by the apostles after the resurrection of the adorable Redeemer, and *believers only were baptized*.

Of course it cannot be expected that we should examine all the cases of baptism recorded in the New Testament. We will, however, direct your attention to those cases about which difficulties in our way are supposed to exist. The first is the case of Lydia, recorded in Acts xvi: 14, 15: *Lydia believed;* and it is said her "household" were baptized with her. If her household were not *believers*, they were either adult or infant unbelievers. I suppose no one would claim that they were adult unbelievers. Then they must have been infant unbelievers. This is the claim of those who rest their claim on this passage. But the utter insufficiency of this plea will readily appear, when we consider that there is not a word in the record about Lydia's husband, or children. To make this available against us, therefore, we must *assume*, take for granted, without a particle of proof—1. That Lydia either was then, or had lately been married. There is no proof that she *had ever had a husband*. 2. We must take for granted, upon the admission that she was or had been married, that *she had children*. There is not a word said in the record about her children. 3. Upon admission that she had children at all, we must assume that they were *infants*. 4. We must assume that these infants were with her at Phillippi. She was of another city, several hundred miles distant, and there is no proof that if she had children at all, that they were with her. For she seems to have been a transient merchant, such as we now call pedlar. One thing is certain—whoever might have been the members composing her household, we are not warranted by the language of the record in concluding there were infant children baptized. Much stress has been laid upon the case of the jailer, recorded in the same chapter. But the least care will dispel any doubts as to the character of the subjects of the ordinance in this case. It is declared that the apostles, Paul and Silas, "*spoke unto him the word of the Lord, and to all that were in his house.*" Then all were the subjects of instruction by the apostles. Farther, it is said that the jailer "*rejoiced, believing in God with all his house.*" Here we are informed that all his house were *instructed*, and that *all believed*, so that there can be no difficulty in deter-

mining that the record sustains our position fully. The household of Stephanus is sometimes referred to as proof that the apostles baptized infant children upon the faith of their parent or parents. Paul says, (1 Cor. i: 16): "And I baptized also the household of Stephanus." Now, says the advocate of infant baptism, here is a case you cannot deny. There is nothing said here of the faith of any; therefore we must presume there were infants in the household of Stephanus. But if you will turn to the sixteenth chapter of the same epistle, and read the fifteenth verse: "I beseech you, brethren, (ye know the house of Stephanus, that it is the first fruits of Achaia, and that they have addicted themselves to the ministry of the saints.')" In this case there is proof to a demonstration, as with the jailer's family, that there were no infant children baptized in this case by the apostles.

The only remaining case which I now will refer to, is the case of Cornelius. The supposed difficulties about this case also vanish at a glance. Cornelius says to Peter, (Acts x: 33,) "Now, therefore, we are all here present before God, to hear all things that are commanded thee of God." The historian, in reporting the case, says, after the preaching of Peter, "The Holy Ghost fell on all them which heard the word." Acts x: 44. And Peter commanded those who had received the Holy Ghost, and only those, (vs. 47, 48,) to be baptized.

Now, the cases to which we have referred are the cases of most difficulty to our view, and you see that with a little care, they make no difficulty whatever. We have attempted a candid investigation of these points, and think we have found, that instead of operating against our views, they very materially sustain us.

(2.) The commission under which the apostles acted made no mention of any as the proper subjects of Christian baptism, but believers. "Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature: he that believeth and is baptized shall be saved, and he that believeth not shall be damned." "Go teach all nations, baptizing them," &c. This is the commission under which the disciples were to act, and this mentions no one as fitted to receive baptism but believers in Christ. Now, then, it must follow that if THIS be the authority upon which baptism is administered, and it be administered to any but believers, it must be by transcending the commission. It will not do to argue that because Christ is *silent*, THEREFORE we ought to baptize them, for he meant so. We suppose that Christ *said* what he *meant*, and that the Holy Ghost has fairly recorded his language. Nor is there a single case recorded in which the apostles baptized any but *professed believers*. This, then, is "*the old path—the good way.*"

(3.) The Scriptures nowhere speak of any receiving baptism who did not immediately become members of the churches. The Scriptures know nothing of an *unbaptized* membership, or of a

baptized *non-membership*. They nowhere speak of any being baptized who were not members of the churches, except such as had been excluded from fellowship, as Simon Magus, the incestuous man, &c., &c. Let us then bear this in mind, and enquire—

(4.) *What were the duties required of all the members of the churches?* And we will see that the apostles knew nothing of infant baptism, because they knew nothing of infant church membership. Examine into the nature of the duties enjoined upon all the church members, and then ask yourselves what is requisite to a discharge of these duties. See if these duties can be discharged by any other than a heart renewed by divine grace. I seriously call the attention of all who differ from us to the consideration of this point. Did the apostles in their epistles address an *unregenerate* membership? And are the duties enumerated to be performed by the unsanctified? **NAY, VERILY.** These are duties enjoined upon all the members of the churches, and require to their discharge, capacity for understanding, and repentance and faith on the part of the subjects. From the nature, therefore, of the duties required of all the members of the churches, we conclude that none but *regenerate* persons can be members of the churches, according to apostolic institution. Those who discharge these duties must be *renewed* in the spirit of their mind. It is useless to speak of their discharge by any other. How, then, could they be addressed to others? Remember, we are not warranted from the record to believe that any had been baptized who were not considered members of the churches, except such as had been excommunicated. All others baptized are members; and these duties are enjoined upon them as such.

(5.) These views are sustained by the most learned and candid ecclesiastical historians. There is a unanimity in this matter that is utterly inconsistent with the opposite of our opinion. Dr. Wall, the champion of infant baptism, frankly admits all we claim. He says: "Among all the persons that are recorded as baptized by the apostles, there is no express mention of any infant." *Hist. In. Bap.*, Pref. p. 27 Ox. ed. He pleads for the rite on the ground of *tradition* and *Jewish analogy*. Our proposition is that there is no *clear* case of infant baptism in the record; this Dr. W. owns in this passage. The learned Neander says: "Baptism was administered at first only to adults, as men were accustomed to conceive baptism and faith as strictly connected. We have all reason for not deriving infant baptism from apostolic institution, and the recognition of it which followed somewhat later as an apostolic tradition, serves to confirm this hypothesis." Neander, vol. I, p. 311. Quotations to an almost indefinite extent might be made to the same effect. But our time will not allow. These, therefore, must suffice. If, therefore, we listen to the voice of the Holy Spirit, as it speaks in the

word; if we listen to the voice of history, we hear only of professed believers being received into the churches during the apostolic times, and immediately thereafter. From this testimony we conclude that we are justified in admitting those only to the ordinances of the church who profess faith in the Son of God. This is "the old path—the good way." Let us "walk therein."

2. We hold that nothing is valid baptism but the immersion of a professed believer, in water, by a properly authorized administrator. Herein we differ from our brethren of other denominations. Pedobaptists regard, not only the infant children of believing parents as fit subjects of baptism, which we have just considered, but they also regard *sprinkling* or *pouring* of water, in the name of the Trinity, as the act of baptism, as well as immersion. We take issue on this ground, and claim that sprinkling or pouring is not baptism at all. Let us briefly consider this point; and, in regard to it, let us "*ask for the old path*"—the apostolic way. We argue that immersion only is baptism; that anything else is clearly no baptism at all. If Christ intended, as no doubt he did, that this ordinance should be observed by all his followers, it is not reasonable to suppose that he has used a word, which was, at the time he used it, vague and uncertain as to its meaning. It is reasonable to suppose that the term he used in giving his command was one, the meaning of which was well understood by the apostles.

Again: If Christ commanded sprinkling for baptism, he certainly did not command pouring or immersion. If he commanded immersion, he certainly did not command either of the others, for the actions expressed by these words are materially and necessarily different, and we cannot suppose that the blessed Redeemer did not use a word of specific meaning. If he used one of *specific* meaning, the enquiry is, *what is that meaning?*

Once more: If Christ commanded some specific action, has any man or class of men a right to change the meaning of the term, so as that a different action from the one originally required shall be recognized as obedience to Christ? We answer, emphatically, *no*. We have already shown that the church has *executive power only*, not *legislative*.

But did Christ command some specific action, and was that immersion? We hold that he did. As proof,

(1.) We hold that he uses a term to express this action which *primarily* and *ordinarily* means to *immerse*. *This no scholar will dare deny*. The ordinary and general signification of the word is *immerse*. Now, upon the admission that it may mean something else in *extraordinary* connections, yet we would claim that baptism is immersion, because this is *acknowledged by all* to be its *general* signification. If the term used is *admitted* to have two significations, one the general and ordinary, and the other the rare and uncommon, would it not be reasonable, nay, *certain*,

that our Lord used the word in its *general* and *common*, and not in its *infrequent* and *uncommon* signification? We hold that he would. Whatever was the sense in which he used it, it is the duty of Christians to comply with *that* sense of the word. It is not enough, as we conceive, that we find that the word very rarely means something else, and *claim* that this is what the Saviour required his followers to do. If we have reason to believe that the Saviour used this word in its ordinary and general sense, then it is as much our duty to comply with this sense as though the word had *no other* meaning.

(2.) But this word not only *ordinarily* means immerse or dip, but strictly speaking, it is claimed by us, that it *means nothing else*. We grant that in a free translation it may be rendered "wash," and the general sense may be well enough expressed. But this fact does not alter the signification of the word, or give it an additional one. But that this word, strictly speaking, signifies *immerse only*, is the opinion of some of the most learned men of modern times. Dr. Wall says: "It is plain that the ordinary and general practice of St. John, the apostles and primitive church, was to baptize by putting the person into the water, or causing him to go into the water. *Neither do I know of any Protestant who has denied it.*" (The italics are my own.) See Wall's Defense In. Bap., p. 150-1. Here we have the testimony of this distinguished Pædobaptist that *he* did not know of a *single Protestant*, in his day, who denied that *immersion was the practice of the apostles and primitive church*. But had not the word used by our Saviour justified this opinion, is it not reasonable to suppose that there would have been some who would have called it in question?

John Calvin, the founder of the Presbyterian church, says: "The very word *baptize*, however, signifies to immerse; and it is certain that immersion was the practice of the ancient church." Inst. Book IV, chap. 15, § 19.

Dr. Chalmers, the greatest of the divines of the Kirk of Scotland, says: "The original meaning of the word baptism is immersion." Lec. on Rom., lec. 30.

These witnesses serve as a specimen. Others, of high character as scholars and Christians, bear similar testimony to the truth of our position. We might detain you till night reading similar extracts, but these must suffice for the present. But however large may be the signification of the word, it *cannot possibly mean sprinkle or pour*. No lexicographer has given either of these significations as the classical meaning of this word; and we hold that the duty of the friends of the Redeemer is to follow the plain direction of Christ. This is "the old path and the good way;" let us walk therein, and we "shall find rest to our souls."

(3.) As already hinted, the practice of the churches in the ages immediately succeeding the apostles, was immersion. To this no

exception is found, except in cases of sickness. This baptism, "in present danger of death," was administered, because it was believed that one *dying unbaptized* could not be saved. We cannot now enter into the proof of this last point, but there is an abundance of proof at hand.

Neander says: "In respect to the form of baptism, it was in conformity with the original institution and the original import of the symbol, performed by immersion, as a sign of entire baptism into the Holy Spirit, of being entirely penetrated by the same." Vol. I, p. 310. He further says: "It was only with the sick, where the exigency required it, that any exception was made." *Ib.*

Dr. Wall, in speaking of the ancient practice, says: "Their general and ordinary way was to baptize by immersion, or dipping the person, whether it were an infant or grown man or woman, into the water. This is so plain and clear by an infinite number of passages, that, as one cannot but pity the weak endeavors of such pædobaptists as would maintain the negative of it, so also we ought to disown and show a dislike of the profane scoffs which some people give the English anti-pædobaptists merely for their use of dipping."—His. In. Bap., vol. II, p. 384, ed. Ox.

We shall satisfy ourself with one more extract, taken from Dr. Whitby's note on Rom. vi: 4. He says: "It being so expressly declared here, and in Col. ii: 12, that we are buried with Christ in baptism by being buried under the water, and the argument to oblige us to a conformity to his death, by dying to sin, being taken hence, and this *immersion* being religiously observed by all *Christians* for thirteen centuries, and approved by our *church*, and the change of it unto sprinkling, even without any allowance from the *Author* of this institution, or any license from any *council* of the *church*, being that which the *Romanist* still urgeth to justify his refusal of the *cup to the laity*, it were to be wished that this custom might be again of general use, and aspersion only permitted as of old, in cases of the *clinici*, or in present danger of death."

Such is the testimony of history, as related by pædobaptists themselves. Surely, no one will accuse us of unreasonableness for adhering to a practice sanctioned by the word of God, and made venerable by the lapse of eighteen centuries. We are taught by these historic documents, that sprinkling and pouring for baptism is an innovation; and, except in cases of sickness, an innovation of a comparatively recent date. From these facts, too, we find ourselves surrounded by the holy men of past generations. We stand amidst the hosts of God's elect, and looking back, up the stream of time, see the millions of the redeemed and saved for *thirteen hundred years*, "buried with Christ in baptism," and thus declaring their faith in a Saviour once buried, but now arisen to die no more. Thus the voice of the martyred

ones reaches us through their actions, and says: "Follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth." With such proofs as these, my friends, we cannot believe that any other action is baptism. We are honest in our sentiments, and if you will consider these facts and arguments, you will find them not unimportant. Nay, to us they are decisive. *This* is "the old path, the good way." Let us walk therein. Let nothing deter us from following the commands of our Lord. "*If ye love me, keep MY COMMANDMENTS.*"

3. We hold that none should be admitted to the communion of the Lord's supper who have not thus been baptized. We hold, if not *thus* baptized, they are not *baptized at all*, and if not baptized at all, they are not entitled to a participation of the supper of the Lord. We argue this,

(1.) From the example of our Lord in its institution. He ate the supper with his disciples, and not with those who were not his disciples. While, therefore, we are not permitted to see and know the hearts of men, so as to decide who are the true disciples of our Lord, we are to be governed by *his laws* in reference to his own requirements. The question as to whether the disciples who ate the last supper with the Saviour had been baptized, has been thought to deserve some influence in the settlement of this question. We cannot think, in the first place, that it is a competent enquiry, or that if found that they had not been baptized, that it would determine anything in this matter. But it is to beg the question altogether to assume that they had not been baptized; and do not think us severe if we claim that it is done to serve a purpose. We conceive that it is the weakness of the cause it would serve that raises a question at this point. But we have said that if this were a fact settled, that these disciples had not been baptized, it would be destitute of force in the present enquiry—1. Because our Lord being Sovereign, could invite whomsoever he would on that occasion to partake of the supper. 2nd, and chiefly; Because when he gave the commission to his disciples, he made *baptism the first duty* of the believer. "Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you." Mat. xxviii: 19, 20. "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved." Mark xvi: 15, 16. Acting under this commission, the disciples must have required baptism immediately after the exercise of faith; so that participation in the Lord's supper could not have preceded baptism. Baptism, in the order of the commission, must follow faith, and is recognized in the New Testament as the first act of obedience after faith. How did the disciples understand the commission on this point? Evidently as we do. On the day of Pentecost Peter preached, three thousand believed, *were baptized*, and afterwards partook of the supper. Acts ii: 42.

From these considerations we see that repentance and faith, though requisite, are not the only requisites to communion at the Lord's supper. Christ has placed baptism *between* faith and communion, and we dare not remove it. We rejoice to believe that our brethren of other denominations are true lovers of our Lord Jesus Christ, and should it be our happy lot, after the toils and conflicts of life are past, to "enter into the rest that remains to the people of God," we expect to meet thousands of them there. This is the faith and hope we fondly cherish. But this cannot determine the question of communion. The law of Christ must control us in this matter, and not our feelings. We regard them as children of God by faith in Christ, but as *disobedient* children, and disobedient in the very matter that would entitle them to participation in the supper of our Lord. As illustration: A., the head of a family, leaves home, and gives his son B. charge of his matters during his absence, with special direction that he (B.) must see that each member of the family *washes his face* before he eats breakfast, each day during his absence. He also makes this command known to the *family* before he leaves. This arrangement is observed by all the family but C., the second son of A. He comes to the table and demands his meat, while he has not *washed his face*. B. refuses to admit him. Could he do otherwise, if he respected his father's commands? Surely not. Would it avail anything if C. should plead that he was *a son of A.*? Would not B. say to him, "I know you are. I know that you are my brother, and if I were to consult my feelings of affection for you, I would gladly admit you; but you know our father's command, and I dare not disregard it." Would not this be discharging his duty? But suppose C. should say, "Do you not believe my father will give me my share of the estate when I come to my majority? and how then can you refuse me a seat at table?" B. would reply: "I suppose he will, but *that* is nothing to the purpose. Father has not given *that* into my hands. He has only directed me as to what shall be required *before you eat*, and in obedience to his commands, I cannot admit you." I ask you, my friends, if C. has any right to complain at the conduct of B.? This is our language to you. That we do not admit you is *your own fault*, and not ours. We love those who love the Lord Jesus Christ, but we feel bound to obey him in regard to his own ordinances. We do not feel at liberty to invert the order of these duties. Our Lord has committed his ordinances to the keeping of his church, and although we regard you as children by faith, and heirs of everlasting rest, yet our Lord's commands will not allow us to invite you to his table. That we shall commune in heaven is not the question, but whether you have complied with a duty that Christ demands before you can come to his table.

(2.) The supper has been placed within the church, and we dare not take it outside. None are within the church but those

who have been baptized. None have been baptized but those who have been immersed upon a profession of faith by a properly qualified administrator. Therefore, none but those who have thus been baptized are entitled to a seat at the communion table.

(3.) We act upon the same principle upon which our brethren of other denominations act in regard to the supper. They hold that baptism is a prerequisite to communion. The only difference is in regard to what constitutes baptism.

(4.) We hold that there is no *saving efficacy* in these ordinances, but regard them as binding on the authority of Christ. He has positively enjoined them, and we hold that they are binding on that account. We believe also that they are typical of the change wrought in the heart by the Holy Spirit. Oceans of water cannot wash away our sin. The heart all polluted can be cleansed only by the blood of Christ, applied "through faith in his name." "Baptism is not the putting away the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God." The blood of the Son of God only can remove the guilt of sin, and save us from death. But in baptism, when administered in accordance with the word of God, we stipulate a good conscience towards God. Well may the follower of the blessed Redeemer have this good conscience when he obeys this command. Here he marks the foot-prints of his Redeemer, as he descended into the Jordan, and was baptized by his servant John. It was then the Holy Spirit visibly descended and rested on the Holy One, and the voice from heaven said: "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." 'Tis here he shows his love to his Saviour while he is baptized in the likeness of his burial, and thereby declares his faith in that resurrection of which Christ has become "the first fruits." It is here, too, that he symbolizes the death which he has undergone to sin, through the operation of the Spirit of God, and his newness of life. Well may he here stipulate "a good conscience toward God." This is "the old path and good way." This is the doctrine of the apostles. Let us "walk therein," that we may have "a good conscience toward God."

III. Having "stood in the ways, and seen, and asked for the old paths, where is the good way," and as we conceive, *found that way*, let us heed the injunction of our text, and "WALK THEREIN." This is the command of God. It will be of no service to have found "the old path—the good way," if we walk not therein. At whatever cost, or whatever sacrifice, we should walk in this "old path." Does it seem "strait and narrow?" Never mind that—it is "*the good way*." Does it cost us a sacrifice of our former opinions and dearly prized faith? Better sacrifice these than walk in any other than the "old paths."

"And must I part with all I have,
My dearest Lord, for thee?"

"It is better for thee to enter into life halt or maimed, rather than having two hands or two feet, to be cast into everlasting fire." "He that taketh not his cross and followeth after me is not worthy of me." "WALK THEREIN" is the command of God. We are not to stop with having found "the old paths." This is necessary to walking therein, but having found the way, let us make haste to walk in it. "To obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams. Rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft."

IV. In conclusion, let us note the encouragement, "Ye shall find rest to your souls." To walk in "the old paths—the good way," is the only means of finding rest to our souls. It is the way that God has appointed. Haste, and delay not to keep the commandments of God. In the discharge of the duties herein enjoined, with those in which we all agree, we shall find "rest to our souls" in this life, and that which is to come.

CONCLUSION.

Thus we have briefly presented our views as tested by the Scriptures. How do they correspond? Are our teachings in harmony with them or not? We leave it with you to decide. These are the doctrines we expect to be taught in this house, which we now dedicate to the service of Almighty God. May the presence of the Lord God dwell here; may he bless those who worship here; may the truth of the everlasting gospel ever be proclaimed; and may many happy souls be born to God here, and live with him in the skies, to bless his name that SHARON meeting house, Warren Co., N. C., was ever built and dedicated to his service. And you, my brother,* through whose efforts this house has been erected, have great reason to thank God and take courage. May God abundantly bless your efforts to build up his cause here; and may you live to see many of your friends and relatives born to God within these walls. And may the presence of God be with *you*, and the blessings of our heavenly Father be with us all. Amen.

* Rev. L. C. Perkinson.